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ON THE DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EUROPE AND AFRICA

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Abstract

The paper explores the dialectical relationship between EU and Africa as it is driven by the relative asymmetric capacities and divergent priorities of the involved parties. Both the European Union and the African Union have enlarged their capabilities and increased their foreign policy ambitions over recent decades. However, the asymmetric relationship persisted. The increased visibility of the EU in the global arena and its "normative" ambitions meant a change in EU–Africa relations. However, in the last decades, Africa remained mostly undeveloped and we have witnessed increase in violent conflicts and state fragility, despite decades of "stick and carrot" institutional measures. This suggested that the existing EU-Africa cooperation formula should be improved. The regional power of the EU (structural power) determines how the EU relates to other actors, including the AU. As such, revisiting the policy cooperation errors of the past, building trust, and investing in academic cooperation are thus essential, through redefining the basis for cooperation between Europe and Africa.

Keywords: EU–Africa relations, Cotonou Partnership Agreement, partnerships, structural power, university

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An (un)adequate theoretical framework

Most Western-centered IR theories are unable to adequately analyse the nature of African states and the international relations these are engaged with; due to historical simplification, ideological constrains and the artificial nature of the African states. These states did not emerge as a result of a of social, economic and religious self-determination. Rather, the modern African states were created to serve Western interests, in their initial form of colonial structures. As such, the theoretical framework cannot adequately explain the "historic meeting, collision, and dialectics between the project of nation-state-making and the counterclaims of ethnonationalism"[1].

The direct colonial rule transformed the development of Africa's own complex models of political organization. As such, Africans had to adapt their political systems (some of which embodied both traditional and progressive practices) to the realities of a colonial existence. In the clash with colonialism, Africa lost its great variety of political forms. As Potholm notes, in pre-colonial Africa, "monarchy, democracy, dictatorship, theocracy - coexisted within a relatively small geographical area and often under similar socioeconomic conditions"[2].

Unlike the Western model, the African pre-colonial political systems were not only more diverse, but they were mostly centered around a pluralistic view of nations. In most pre-colonial African political systems, "there was a cultural nation, a linguistic nation, but not a political one in the sense of having a strong central political authority or, in many cases, even a central authority at all"[3]. The primary theoretical assumption underlying the exercise of political power in pre-colonial Africa was that it

[1] Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Nation-State in Crisis and the Rise of Ethnonationalism" in Edwin Wilmsen and Patrick McAllister (eds.), *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 125.
[2] Christian P. Potholm, *The Theory and Practice of African Politics*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1976, p. 4.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 12

"ought to be localized, fragmented, and dispersed, not focused on any central political authority"[4]. Since these types of political models did not fit the Westphalian one, their status within a colonial framework opposed the European colonial state and reaffirmed their desire to re-establish and develop African models of governance.

In the twentieth century, after the Second World War, European colonial powers had the historical opportunity to rectify the errors of colonialism. "Instead, during the decolonization period, Belgium, Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal compounded their errors by carrying out a process of colonial disengagement as arbitrary and detrimental to the long-term prospects for Africa as their engagement centuries before. Specifically, the departing colonial powers selected a group of post-colonial African leaders drawn from upper elites who had more in common with their former colonial masters than the people they would govern. Not surprisingly, therefore, the first generation of African leaders embraced, without much questioning, the state-centric model devised for Europe."[5] As such, that most African states remain illegitimate and undemocratic, unable to stand on their own without the neo-colonial support of the West. Given this situation, ethnonationalism re-emerges in the heart of the people, as a natural reaction against excessive centralizing tendencies of the state.

As Assis Malaquias *et al.* note, a purist state-centric approach is inadequate for a fair understanding of African political reality, and consequently the relationship with international actors. Therefore, a mixed approach may better emphasize the importance of political, economical, social, cultural, religious, and other connections to nations; in addition ethnicity cannot be ignored in understanding contemporary Africa. As a consequence, a return to the flexible concept of nation, ethnicity, gender

[4] *Ibidem*.

[5] Assis Malaquias "Reformulating International Relations Theory: African Insights and Challenges" in Kevin C. Dunn, Timothy M. Shaw (eds.), *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, p. 15.

and social conditions, as well as sub-state actors may provide a more adequate framework for understanding the behaviour of the African states in the international arena.

Analysing contemporary Africa, the first negative assumption associated with it ("hopeless continent", poverty, state failuare, etc.) was built – in the 1970s – on the narrative that the continent was excluded from the global market.[6] The second assumption, from the early 2000, that of the "rising Africa"[7] states that the continent isolation has ended (partly due to the neoliberal economical efforts operated by the West). Both paradigms are consequences of a Eurocentric conception of Africa – a continent which was oversimplified by the West and was not allowed to be understood in a nunaced, multilayered manner.

The theoretical assumption of the present paper is that modern Africa, despite all the effort of being marginalised, denigrated and exploited, has always been an essential part of the global system and remains a major constitutive site for world politics. The issue of Africa's position in global politics cannot be reduced to discourses of inclusion/exclusion (the opposition between a failure or a rising narrative).[8]

Africa in the International Context

The end of the Cold War has determined many African leaders to look for new sources of external support and forms of legitimation. The increased difficulty of maintaining authoritarian rule without access to significant external resources can explain the wave of "democratization" that occurred in Africa during the early 1990s. These cases of

[6] See M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age*, Vol. 1, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

[7] Charles Roxburgh *et al.*, "Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies", *McKinsey Global Institute*, June 2010 <mckinsey.com/media/McKinsey> accessed on December 2019.

[8] See Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Theory from the South, or How Euro-America is Evolving Towards Africa*, New York: Paradigm, 2012.

"democratization" conducted to multi-party political systems which has failed to remain autonomous from potential external donors or to incorporate, either economically or ideologically, the most alienated segments of many African societies: the youth, rural communities and women[9].

In the following, we will depict the role of the main international actors involved in the current development of the African continent: US, China, Japan, Russia, France and Britain – as these actors partly had shaped the African path, either through ambiguous policies, or pragmatic approaches.

Related US engagement with Africa, the first has embraced, at least in discourse, a humanitarianist approach. However, with the brief and problematic exception of Somalia in the early 1990s, the US administrations have generally neglected Africa's genocides, wars, famines and epidemics. The policy frameworks adopted by the US have failed to significantly improve the lives of Africans, although certain states and their elites have benefited from them[10]. It can be added that the humanitarianist perspective in nevertheless doubled with great interest in human and physical resources (young population and oil) of the vast African continent.

China's relations with Africa has increased in the last two decades, under the vision of South-South cooperation, and more recently through Belt and Road Initiative[11]. The rhetoric of "mutual benefit", "non-interference", "win-win strategy"[12] rises considerably expectations in the

[9] See J. F. Bayart, "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion" in *African Affairs*, no. 99, 2000, p. 227.

[10] See James J. Hentz, "The Contending currents in United States Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa" in Ian Taylor and Paul Williams (eds.), *Africa in International Politics : External Involvement on the Continent*, New York: Routledge, 2017.

[11] BRI is a global development strategy adopted by People's Republic of China, involving infrastructure development and investemens in Asia, Africa, Europe and Americas. See Ana Pantea, "Belt and Road Initiative and Its Geostrategic Significance for Eastern Europe" in *Knowledge-Based Organization*, no. 24(1), 2018, pp. 171-179.

[12] See Sven Grimm, "China-Africa Cooperation: Promises, Practice and Prospects" in *Journal of Contemporary China*, no. 23, 2014, pp. 993-1011.

African countries. Nevertheless, the success of this promissory cooperation depends considerably on the socio-economic, as well as political circumstances or military strategies which are articulated within the African continent. But at the same time, the grandious plan generates threats for China in terms of: "reputational risks derived from its association with certain governments; risks to its business interests posed by mercurial leaders and weak regulatory regimes; and risks faced by its citizens operating in unstable African environments."[13] The consequence is an increasing Chinese involvement in African security (at the level of the UNSC and the African Union, as well as financial assistance for peace support missions). The announcement of a China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security creates concerns that China expands its role within the existing structures of regional and global governance. Certainly, China plays an increasingly positive role in the fragile political environment in Africa, however, a more ambiguous role is seen with regard to arms transfers.

Japan's Africa policy is focused on strategic competition with China, commerce and an extensive aid programme. The developing relationship between Japan and Africa took place, partly, as the result of changing Japanese interests, but in the same time due to the outcome of political shifts within Africa over the past three decades. Even if the aid constitutes the traditional vector in the relationship between Japan and Africa, a significant element of Japan's activities on the continent is built upon a notion of an "Afro-Asia bloc". Just as China, Japonese policy-makers have also been keen to promote Japan as a non-Western country with a "special relationship" with Africa. However, as Scarlett Cornelissen points out, beneath this rhetoric Japan's Africa policy is in practice largely self-serving, using Japan's presence in Africa as a means to attain Tokyo's international

[13] Chris Alden and Laura Barber, "Introduction: Seeking Security: China's Expanding Involvement in Security Cooperation in Africa" in Chris Alden *et al.* (eds.), *China and Africa. Building Peace and Security Cooperation on the Continent*, New York: Pelgrave, 2018, p. 1.

objectives, and focused predominantly upon South Africa.[14] In addition, in its rivalry with China, Japan can compete for influence and engagement on the African continent. For example, as an alternative to the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation, Japan has established its own multilateral institution: the Tokyo International Conference for African Development.[15] Even though Chinese engagement is apparently more vizible, Japan has a stronger sense of rivalry that China has. This phenomenon become more apparent because of the transformation in which the African continent is perceives by the two actors as a land of "economic opportunities".

Russian foreign policy towards Africa has improved in the recent years. For instance, the year 2019 was labelled as the "year of Africa in Russia"[16] Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, Russia has included a refurbished interest in Africa, particularly with regard to promoting peace on the continent, and also promoting economic relations. Being consequent to a revisionist agenda and his vision on Russia as a re-emerging power, V. Putin is taking seriously what he sees as Russia's "special responsibility" as a permanent member of the UN Security Council; as such he asserts that there is no ideological context (as it used to be in the Soviet era), only trade and economic aspirations. Accordingly, Russia has gained a comprehensive footprint on the continent due to: increase participation of Russian companies in Africa's security services market; political expertise offered for African politicians; and a deeper cooperation in the religious sphere.

EU member states, Britain, France and Germany keep maintaining bilateral relations with the former colonies. For instance, Britain's Africa policy has been shaped by low priority accorded to African affairs. As Paul William emphasizes, Great Britain manifested a selective official interest on

[14] See Scarlett Cornelissen, "Japan–Africa Relations. Patterns and prospects" in Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-125.
[15] Miwa Hirono, "Asymmetrical Rivalry Between China and Japan in Africa" in *The Pacific Review*, 2019, pp. 1-29.
[16] World Economic Forum, 8 Key Challenges to the Future of Russian-African Relations, 27th October 2019 <weform.org/agenda/2019> accessed on 3 November 2019.

the continent, as well as unwillingness to move beyond an approach of imperial spheres of influence. In addition, the British state mentained close collaboration with its transnational corporations, and as a consequence of these three strategies, the cooperation can be considered limited.[17] In terms of promoting peace, Britain had a mixed approach. The notable failure to respond effectively to genocide in Rwanda has only been partially offset by the commitment invested in Sierra Leone. The form of liberal democracy promoted by the British is also seen as being compatible with market economies, and often privileges the importance of civil and political rights over economic and social ones. In sum, despite some potentially encouraging developments in Sierra Leone, Williams contends that Britain's Africa policy has remained one of "damage limitation".

France's African policy has been marked by a contradictory process of reform and continuity since the early 1990s. France has traditionally claimed a special relationship with Africa, although it has drawn criticism for bearing all the characteristics of paternalistic neo-colonialism[18]. The links between France and Africa have been highly personalized, perhaps more so than any other external actor.[19] This meant a dual approach: that of reformist impulses that emerged after the Rwanda debacle, the crisis in Zaire and the rebellions in the Central African Republic which did not penetrate very deeply in the political elite. The return of the conservatives has meant a return to the classical approach (particularly under the Gaullist Jacques Chirac). France's ties with Africa reflect a reciprocal relationship, driven primarily by the desire to be seen as a global player and the wish to export a broader francophone project. The export of French identity and cultural values overseas is an integral part of Paris's African policies. In this

[17] See Paul William, "Britain and Africa after the Cold War" in Taylor and Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-49.
[18] Daniela Kroslak, "France's Policy Towards Africa Continuity or change?" in Taylor and Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-83.
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

sense, France needs Africa for its own image just as much as Africa needs France for material and political support.

The Mean of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA)

EU-Africa relations are politically governed by the Cotonou Agreement (2000-2020) and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy[20], which both include political, economic and development dimensions, with 78 countries in the ACP (Africa-Caribbean and Pacific) group. EU-ACP relations date back to the Lomé Conventions I-IV establishing development cooperation and trade provisions, which allowed 99.5 % of products from ACP countries free access to the European market.

The goal of the Cotonou Agreement was to create opportunities to the ACP countries to be more present in the world economy. The Agreement employs the term "partnership", highlighting mutual commitment and responsibility, and emphasises political dialogue, human rights, democracy and good governance. The European Parliament gave its consent to the ratification of the 2010, but expressed "its strongest reservations about parts of the Agreement which do not reflect the position of the European Parliament and the values of the Union"[21]. Parliament objected, in particular, to the absence of an explicit clause on "non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation"[22].

An important step forward was made, in 2007, when the EU's policy regarding all 54 African sets out the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES)[23] which moves beyond purely African matters, towards effectively

[20] Gonzalo Urbina Treviño, "External Relations: Africa", European Parliament, 4/2019, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/180/africa> accessed on November 2019.

[21] *Ibidem.*

[22] *Ibidem*.

[23] Joint Africa–EU Strategy <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/africa/continental-cooperation/joint-africa-eu-strategy_en> accessed on November 2019.

addressing global challenges such as migration, climate change, peace and security.

The fourth EU-Africa summit, held in Brussels in April 2014, led to the adoption of a political declaration by Heads of State and Government and a results-oriented roadmap for 2014-2017. At the summit, it was decided to focus the partnerships around five priority areas: (i) peace and security; (ii) democracy, good governance and human rights; (iii) human development; (iv) sustainable and inclusive development and growth and continental integration; and (v) global and emerging issues. In this new cooperation framework, science, technology and innovation are recognised as a cross-cutting issue, in view of their contribution to the attainment of all other socio-economic development objectives. A separate declaration on migration and mobility was approved.

Although the three pillars of the CPA addressing political dialogue, development cooperation and trade have shown significant improvement, there is tension within the continent related representation after the expiration of CPA in 2020. There are two camps: "those, within the ACP Group, who wish to preserve the EU–ACP cooperation model; and those, within AU circles, who believe that the AU is Africa's only legitimate interlocutor with the EU."[24] The main issue is essentially on who would best be able to represent the collective interest of African states vis-à-vis the EU.

> *Ambassadors of the same African countries – sitting on the CoA in Brussels or the PRC in Addis Ababa – support processes leading to alternative outcomes. Clearly, coordination must not have worked well in national capitals, if ministerial representatives of African governments meeting in the ACP context (in most cases finance ministers) and ministerial representatives of the same governments meeting in the AU context (generally foreign affairs ministers) also agreed upon*

[24] Maurizio Carbone, "Caught between the ACP and the AU: Africa's relations with the European Union in a post-Cotonou Agreement context," in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 25:4, 2018, p. 487.

> *two decisions that were difficult to reconcile. These findings pave the way for further research on Africa's international relations, certainly on Africa's collective agency vis-à-vis other actors, but also on the formation of foreign policy preferences of single African states.* [25]

The two separate common fronts defend their role as the EU's legitimate interlocutors. At the present moment, the ACP Group has failed to represent African interests and the AU consolidated its position.

The contemporary understanding of EU–Africa relations

Although the ACP excludes North Africa and includes former colonies outside of Africa, it constituted a central avenue for engagement between the two regions. In addition, the EU–Africa partnership works under the framework of the Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES).

The academic works which address EU-Africa relations emphasize the problematic dimensions of the relationship, including development and dependency, asymmetrical trade arrangements and the exercise of power.[26]

John Kotsopoulos & Frank Mattheis[27] point out the relationship in terms of: colonial legacy, meanings of partnership, asymmetry, market liberalisation, politicisation, regional actorness and the changing global order. They argue that the seven elements are intertwined and influence each other.

> *The colonial legacy still affects the relationship between the two parties in that 'it contributes to building expectations of compensation (through aid) and recording disappointments when those expectations are not met'. In addition, despite*

[25] *Ibidem*, p. 492.

[26] See Cosgrove Twitchett, *Europe and Africa: From Association to Partnership*, Farnborough: Saxon House, 1978; J. Ravenhill, *Collective Clientalism: The Lomé Conventions and North–South Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985; M. Carbone, *The European Union and International Development: The Politics of Foreign Aid*, London: Routledge, 2007.

[27] John Kotsopoulos and Frank Mattheis, "A Contextualisation of EU–Africa Relations: Trends and Drivers from a Reciprocal Perspective" in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, no. 25(4), 2018, pp. 445-460.

> *repeated protestations by many African elites since independence to break free from the colonial past and the ties that bind Africa and Europe together, for most Sub-Saharan African countries, the EU remains the main trading partner and it absorbs around 85% of Africa's agricultural exports and 75% of Sub-Saharan Africa's overall trade.*[28]

According to the authors, recent self-characterisations of the EU as a normative super-power is highly problematic as it still represent a form of imperial moral superiority and a means to "publicly legitimise, and to self-rationalise, external policy agendas"[29]. The colonial legacy remains a decisive factor, as it frames not only the discourse but also the self-positioning as well as the perception of the actors.

The term partnership is used more as an euphemism than a real attribute of the cooperation, as asymmetry in the negotiation power is evident between the two actors which act in a neo-liberal context.

The influence of regional actorness is evident in the way the AU has treated the EU as a model. Daniel Bach outlined how African institutions established "ambitious institutional blueprints, largely inspired by the EU's [...] norm-driven approach to integration"[30] and later measured their progress by using the EU as a benchmark.

The EU seeks to promote the principles of democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights. Clearly, there is a combined interest within the EU in promoting these values in ways that are connected to questions of security, poverty reduction and as well as conflict prevention, crisis management and conflict resolution.

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[28] John Kotsopoulos and Frank Mattheis, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

[29] M. Langan, "Normative Power Europe and the Moral Economy of Africa–EU Ties: A Conceptual Reorientation of 'Normative Power"' in *New Political Economy*, no. 17, 2011, p. 263, *apud* John Kotsopoulos and Frank Mattheis, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

[30] Daniel Bach, *Regionalism in Africa: Genealogies, Institutions and Trans-state Networks*, London: Routledge, 2015, p. 77.

> *For the AU, the main focus when it comes to the issues of governance, democracy and the rule of law has been the creation and strengthening of workable instruments at the continental level in order to consolidate integration and enable the continent to speak as one on the international stage.* [31]

In practice, cooperation between the EU and the AU can be seen on areas of governance collaboration which include harmonised approaches in higher education, improving the standard of public finance systems, and creating space for greater participation of civil societies.

The Academic Dimension

After 2020, in a 'post-Cotonou' context, human development and academic cooperation may play a more significan role in the EU-Africa cooperation, and as a consequence the role of inter-academic cooperation will increase. As such, in the following it will be investigated how the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the Erasmus+ program might influence the African continent, without serving European interests.

Many researchers, like Carlos Cardoso, Daniel Sifuna or Bethuel Markusso[32], consider that African universities are locked in a crisis. The origins of this crisis go back to the 1980s, but the crisis itself continues up to nowadays. Even though protests (in South Africa[33] or Sub-Saharan Africa) challenged the status quo, the production of marketable goods, "new

[31] Luckystar Miyandazi *et al.*, "AU–EU Relations: Challenges in Forging and Implementing a Joint Agenda" in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, no. 25(4), 2018, pp. 461-480.

[32] See Carlos Cardoso, "The Challenges Facing African Universities" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 2019, pp. 1-19; Daniel N. Sifuna, "Neoliberalism and the Changing Role of Universities in Sub-Sakharan Africa: The Case of Research and Development" in *Journal of Higher Education in Africa (JHEA)/ Revue d'Enseignement Supérieur en Afrique (RESA),* no. 12(2), 2014, pp. 109–130.

[33] In the post-apartheid society South Africa has undergone a continuing and conflictual process of decolonisation and recreation of new university identities and policies. A relevant example was the *Fees Must Fall* student uprising. See M. Hall, "South Africa's Student Protests Have Lessons for All Universities" in *The Guardian*, 2016, March 3 <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/mar/03/south-africas-student-protests-have-lessons-for-all-universities> accessed on November 2019.

managerialism", the large number of enrolled students, the lack of vision, financing issues and exaggerate speed of development impoverish a fit development. As the neoliberal principles had penetrated many African universities, like in other parts of the world,

> *contemporary colleges and universities face confrontation between local expectations—for example, responsiveness to their own historical traditions, social commitments, accomplishments and liabilities—and those posed by global competitiveness and dominant perceptions about the characteristics of so-called world-class universities. These conflicting demands have taken place in the midst of, and have also deepened, existing crises of identity in higher education systems and institutions.*[34]

These discussions are linked to the dilemmas over local and regional responsiveness, versus international orientation and competition; social engagement, versus market orientation of the African universities.

Decolonizing the African university is seen by the overwhelming majorly of scholars as being the first step forward. That means the construction of new knowledge that speaks to the context of the African condition, rather than being a mirror image of Western knowledge production. In this paradigm, Cloete & Muller called for "endogenisation of the curriculum, including mother-tongue instruction; local, alternative or African knowledges and philosophy; and non-western technologies of development."[35] In other words, there is a demand for knowledge change in the African university in terms of the "re-narration of the African

[34] Imola Ordorika, "Knowledge and Change in Contemporary Postcolonial Universities" in Michael Cross and Amasa Ndofirepi (eds.), *Knowledge and Change in African Universities, Volume 1 – Current Debates*, Rotterdam: Sense, 2017, p. x.

[35] N. Cloete, and J. Muller, *South African Higher Education Reform: What Comes After Post-Colonialism?* Wynberg: Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 1998, p. 3.

existence"[36] and the need for constructive "...discourse that mainstreams local relevance and vocalises the silent voices"[37] of African experiences.

Felix Maringe has offered a taxonomy for Africanising and decolonising the post-colonial structures in order to create a "new African university": a mass-based institution, not an elitist one; new skills based curricula in indigenous languages; focus on the local environment; priority to collaborative learning; expand the African value systems; concentrate on the establishment of Afro-based knowledge, etc. [38]

The question which arises in this context is how can African universities be transformed without serving external interests and agendas?

For instance, in the official discourse, Europe links internationalisation to knowledge production strategy through the Erasmus+ programs that encourage the mobility of students and scholars within Europe and worldwide.

In cooperation with Africa, within the 2015 Valletta Summit, the representatives of EC have acknowledged the need to substantially increase the number of Erasmus+ scholarships for African students and academic staff. As a consequence, the summit launched the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. Subsequently, in September 2018, the Commission launched a new Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs (COM(2018) 643)[39], with "investment in education and matching skills and

[36] C. I. O. Okeke, "A Framework for Curriculum Policy for Social Cohesion in Africa" in *Progressio*, no. 30, 2008, p. 61.

[37] J. T. Lebakeng, M. M. Phalane and N. Dalindjebo, "Epistemicide, Instituitional Cultures and the Imperative for the Africanisation of Universities in South Africa" in Alternation, no. 13(1), 2006, p. 70.

[38] Felix Maringe, "Transforming Knowledge Production Systems In The New African University" in Michael Cross and Amasa Ndofirepi (eds), *Knowledge and Change in African Universities, Volume 2 – Re-Imagining the Terrain*, Rotterdam: Sense, 2017, p. 3.

[39] EC, Communication on a New Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs: Taking our Partnership for Investment and Jobs to the Next Level, 12 September 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2018/EN/COM-2018-643-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF> accessed on November 2019.

jobs". In the document, the Commission announced that it would support mobility of students, staff and academics across the African continent through the Inter-Africa mobility scheme, in order to improve employability in Africa.

The priorities agreed for EU-Africa cooperation are, beside mobility, to harmonise higher education in Africa (Tuning Africa project); to enhance quality assurance and accreditation in African universities (even though the term reflects a hierarchical cooperation scheme); and to develop centres of excellence in Africa (following the structures of the European ones).

In November 2017, the European Parliament adopted a resolution – EU-Africa strategy: a boost for development (2017/2083(INI)) – in which it

> *calls for the EU and the AU to promote exchanges between students, teachers, entrepreneurs and researchers between the two continents; welcomes the Commission's proposal to launch an African Youth Facility, expanding the scope of Erasmus+, and an EU vocational education and training facility; calls for a discussion on the recognition by the EU of certificates and diplomas issued by African schools and universities; notes that ensuring circular migration is essential for sustainable development; and for preventing a brain drain from Africa*[40].

Neven Mimica, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, declared in 2019 that "education lies at the heart of development. Investing in skills is crucial to provide people, especially the youth, with decent jobs and future perspectives. Reinforcing a mutually beneficial partnership between Africa and Europe in the field of

[40] European Parliament resolution of 16 November 2017 on the EU-Africa Strategy: A Boost for Development, paragraph 60, *Official Journal of the European Union,* 4 October 2018 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017IP0448> accessed on November 2019.

higher education is key to sustainable economic growth and long-term prosperity."[41]

The most innovative financial instrument is the Intra-Africa Academic Mobility scheme (30 million euros, between 2016-2019) which was established with the aim of promoting "sustainable development and contributing to poverty reduction", by increasing the availability of trained and highly qualified professionals in Africa. The scheme enhances student and staff mobility between African countries by means of cooperation. Obviously, the financially scheme is beyond expectations, but for sure the scheme will bring positive outcomes.

The Commission's Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation initiative (implemented by EU and AU) has published the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Unfortunately, the standard is an unadapted copy of the European model, without taking into consideration the different context of the African universities. In addition, challenges like academic corruption, lack of autonomy were not taken into consideration for the development of the standard.

EU-Africa cooperation is in progress, however, the scale of this cooperation is still inadequate given the way the schemes purely copy the EU standards, the low number of African students and researchers involved, and the insufficient financial investment.

> *If the development of intercontinental academic cooperation is to be enhanced, there are five elements to be considered. First, policy and international agreements in the 'post-Cotonou' phase must focus on human development and academic cooperation. Second, priority must be given to adequate funding, not least on the EU side, for instance through the (2021-2027) Erasmus and Horizon Europe*

[41] Neven Mimica, Africa-Europe Alliance: High Level Conference on Higher Education Collaboration, 24 October 2019 <ttps://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news-and-events/africa-europe-alliance-high-level-conference-higher-education-collaboration_en> accessed on November 2019.

programmes. Third, attention must be given to the future scope and budget of the intra-Africa academic mobility scheme. Fourth, issues, such as climate change and migration, must be addressed in the interest of both sides. Finally, further investigation is needed into the potential for multilateral academic cooperation involving partners other than from the EU and Africa. [42]

Africa, with its fast-developing economy, young population and a growing demand for education among young people, it is an important partner for the EU in all areas. In a context in which China plays a more active role in bilateral development cooperation, the role of EU might decree without a more flexible and adapted cooperation scheme, especially in the education field.

Conclusions

The articles gathered in the special issue *Studia Europaea* provide a contextualisation for the study of relations between Africa and the world, as well as structural transformation which are taking place within Africa. After the Cold War, a number of researchers generated a widespread discussion of an "African renaissance". In the last three decades, however, hopes have faded. Structural social adjustment and the political reforms have not led to the expected results.

The main point highlighted by the authors of the issue is that the current state of affair is strongly shaped by the post-colonial experience, to the extent that the governance patterns that have emerged can be even seen as a continuation of colonial rule. The topics discussed by the contributors, such as the de-colonialization of the theory of IR and of the university system; as well as the need for a ground reform in the economic sector (either in neo-liberal, or neo-marxist key), emphasize the key legacy of the

[42] Anna Zygierewicz , "EU-Africa Academic Cooperation ", European Parliamentary Research Service, 642.810, December 2019 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/642810/EPRS_BRI(2019)642810_EN.pdf> accessed on December 2019.

colonial state (authoritarianism, paternalism, etc.) and the disruption which have occurred in the African societies due to the colonial rule.

In terms of interstate development, some authors emphasize the recurrence of civil wars in some African states. These conflicts were either about control over the state or about separatist attempt, and as such unstable and fragmented domestic politics can be seen as the driving factor for the slow stabilization process. Of course, the way in which home affairs had been developed in the post-colonial time is deeply linked to the legitimation mechanism of colonial powers (France, Britain or, previously, even the Soviet Union) and their interference in domestic politics. International recognition and aid system have enabled states to continue to perpetuate their politics even if the actual political control has been limited.

Many African states are still unable to build up sovereignty in order to ensure that their institutions are actually recognised at home and abroad as the highest political authority. The democratic constructions of these institution and the discard of neo-colonialist practices within them might be a feasible long term strategy.

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